

CLAIMS:

1. (Original) A method of distributing software features to a computer being accessible with a plurality of different user profiles each one associated with a corresponding operating context, the method including the steps of:
 - providing a distribution package including at least one item indicative of an activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer, at least one activity being defined as a user activity associated with at least one user profile,
 - storing an indication of the at least one user activity on the computer,
 - accessing the computer with a current user profile, and
 - retrieving and executing each user activity associated with the current user profile in the corresponding operating context.
2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein at least one activity is defined as a global activity associated with all the user profiles, the method further including the steps of:
 - running a global agent outside the context associated with the current user profile,
 - executing each global activity under the control of the global agent,
 - running a user agent during a logon to the computer with the current user profile,each user activity being retrieved and executed under the control of the user agent.
3. (Original) The method according to claim 2, wherein the global agent runs on the computer in a logoff condition.
4. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein each software feature includes a global portion and a user portion necessary in each context for activating the software feature, a corresponding item being indicative of the global activity of enforcing the global portion and a further corresponding item being indicative of the user activity of enforcing the user portion of each associated user profile.

5. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein each item includes a flag defining the corresponding activity as a global activity or a generic user activity, the method further including, for each user activity, the steps of:

storing an indication of a completion of the generic user activity for each user profile, and

verifying whether the generic user activity has been completed in the context associated with the current user profile, the generic user activity being executed in the context associated with the current user profile only if the result of the verification is negative.

6. (Original) The method according to claim 5, further including the steps of:

storing a global memory structure indicating a status of the global portion of each software feature,

storing a user memory structure for each user profile indicating a status of the user portion of each software feature in the corresponding context, and

verifying whether each generic user activity associated with the current user profile has been completed according to a comparison between the global memory structure and the corresponding user memory structure.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 5, further including the steps of:

storing an indication of each user profile allowed to have each software feature enforced, and

verifying whether the current user profile is allowed to have the software feature corresponding to each generic user activity enforced, each generic user activity being executed only if the result of the verification is positive.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the computer is a client workstation of a network, the method further including the step of receiving the distribution package on the client workstation from a server workstation through the network.

9. (Original) A computer program directly loadable into a working memory of a computer for performing the method of claim 1 when the program is run on the computer.
10. (Original) A program product including a computer readable medium on which the program of claim 9 is stored.
11. (Original) A software distribution application for use in a computer being accessible with a plurality of different user profiles each one associated with a corresponding operating context, the software distribution application including a distribution agent for receiving a distribution package including at least one item indicative of an activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer, at least one activity being defined as a user activity associated with at least one user profile, and for storing an indication of the at least one user activity on the computer, and a user agent for retrieving and executing each user activity associated with a current user profile in the corresponding operating context.
12. (Original) A system for distributing software features to a computer being accessible with a plurality of different user profiles each one associated with a corresponding operating context, the system including means for providing a distribution package including at least one item indicative of an activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer, at least one activity being defined as a user activity associated with at least one user profile, means for storing an indication of the at least one user activity on the computer, means for accessing the computer with a current user profile, and means for retrieving and executing each user activity associated with the current user profile in the corresponding operating context.
13. (Original) A system for distributing software features to a computer being accessible with a plurality of different user profiles each one associated with a corresponding operating context, the computer including a distribution agent for receiving a distribution package including at least one item indicative of an activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer, at least one activity being

defined as a user activity associated with at least one user profile, and for storing an indication of the at least one user activity on the computer, a logon module for accessing the computer with a current user profile, and a user agent for retrieving and executing each user activity associated with the current user profile in the corresponding operating context.

14. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of different user profiles includes a first user profile for a first user of the computer and a second user profile for a second user of the computer, and wherein the distribution package includes a first item indicative of a first user activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer for the first user profile and a second item indicative of a second user activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer for a second user profile.

15. (New) The method of claim 14, wherein the first user activity and the second user activity are different.

16. (New) The method of claim 14, wherein the first user activity is to enable a first software product on the computer for the first user profile, the second user activity is to enable a second software product on the computer for the second user profile, and wherein the first software product is not enabled on the computer for the second user profile.

17. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein the plurality of different user profiles includes a first user profile for a first user of the computer and a second user profile for a second user of the computer, and wherein the distribution package includes a first item indicative of a first user activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer for the first user profile and a second item indicative of a second user activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer for a second user profile.

18. (New) The system of claim 17, wherein the first user activity and the second user activity are different.

19. (New) The system of claim 17, wherein the first user activity is to enable a first software product on the computer for the first user profile, the second user activity is to enable a second software product on the computer for the second user profile, and wherein the first software product is not enabled on the computer for the second user profile.

20. (New) The computer program of claim 9, wherein the plurality of different user profiles includes a first user profile for a first user of the computer and a second user profile for a second user of the computer, and wherein the distribution package includes a first item indicative of a first user activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer for the first user profile and a second item indicative of a second user activity for enforcing a corresponding software feature on the computer for a second user profile.

21. (New) An apparatus for distributing software features to a workstation, wherein the workstation is accessible by using one of a plurality of user profiles associated with the workstation, and wherein the user profiles have associated operating context for defining an execution environment of the workstation; comprising:

- a logon module that controls access to the workstation to thereby initiate an operating context for a current user profile;

- a network interface for receiving, from a provider of a software distribution package, a software distribution package that includes a list of items for enforcing a software feature on the workstation, each item having a first field which defines an activity consisting of one or more instructions to be carried out for reaching a desired software configuration, a second field that defines the activity as a global or user activity, and one or more files for enforcing the software feature;

- a distribution agent that runs outside any operating context associated with user profiles of the plurality of user profiles;

- a global catalogue module, controlled by the distribution agent, which specifies global portions of each software feature that have been installed on and removed from the workstation;

a user agent that performs services in the operating contexts associated with the plurality of user profiles;

a user catalogue module, controlled by the user agent, which specifies information on a status of each software feature in each of the operating contexts associated with the plurality of user profiles;

an authorization list module that includes a series of records each having a first field identifying a software feature, a second field identifying one or more user profiles allowed to have this software feature enforced, wherein:

the distribution agent, in response to receiving a software package via the network interface, executes all the actions of the software package identified as global actions and updates a status of corresponding software features in the global catalogue module;

the user agent, in response to an initiation of the operating context associated with the current user profile, retrieves status information for a software feature from the global catalogue module, determines if the current user profile is allowed to have this software feature enforce, and extracts status information from the user catalogue module for the software feature if the software feature is allowed to be enforced for the current user profile;

the user agent compares the status information from the global catalogue module to the status information from the user catalogue module and determines if any further action is necessary to enforce the software feature for the current user profile;

the user agent retrieves the instructions needed for enforcing the software feature for the current user profile if further action is determined to be necessary; and

the user agent executes the retrieved instructions to thereby enforce the software feature for the current user profile and updates status information for the software feature in the user catalogue module.